

The Washington Post _____
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 The Washington Times _____
 The Wall Street Journal _____
 The Christian Science Monitor _____
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 USA Today _____
 The Chicago Tribune _____
Cox News Serv.
 Date 5 SEPT 1990

CHIEF SAYS IRAQIS MORE LIKELY THAN CIA TO KILL SADDAM

Former CIA Director William Colby said Wednesday that effective international pressure against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein could lead to his removal from office in the "traditional way" for that part of the world being murdered.

"The traditional way is for the successor to murder his predecessor," Colby told journalists from 64 countries at the CNN World Report Contributors Conference at the Omni Hotel. "That's what happened (with) Saddam, that's what happened to his predecessor and his predecessor in turn."

He added that the CIA would not be involved in an assassination.

"If that happens in Iraq, that's their business," he said.

"We will not be involved. We will not touch that kind of operation."

Colby, CIA director under Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford, predicted the Persian Gulf crisis will not erupt in a war, and he expects that international economic pressure will force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. He predicted that within three to six months there will be a change in Iraqi policy or Iraqi leadership.

"How many Iraqi families look back and say, 'Our son was killed in that eight-year war that Saddam Hussein ran with Iran, and he just gave everything away. Is he going to send our second son to get killed in a new adventure and then give it all away?'"

Colby said there is room for Saddam to negotiate a peaceful settlement and get some land he wants in the gulf, but it may be difficult for the Bush administration to achieve its goal of restoring Kuwait's legitimate government.

"It may be that there is some agreement for elections," Colby said. "There are some negotiating liberties there."

On another topic, Colby said journalists and CIA agents have similar jobs, and he has "no moral compunctions" about using journalists as spies.

"I used to have several people who pretended to be journalists. They had very good cover," he said, adding that they were "very handy" because sometimes journalists could get more information than CIA agents. "They thought it was their patriotic duty."

Although other nations use journalists as spies, he said, Americans have taken a "very rigid position" against it.

"The current situation is that we don't" use journalists, academics or missionaries to gather intelligence information for the government, he said, noting that all were used during World War II.